

Abroad

Paris

Relaying America

France will supply \$300 million worth of equipment for a steel plant in the Soviet Union to fulfill a contract originally negotiated by a United States-Japanese consortium but canceled by Washington after the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. A group of French companies, including the giant Creusot-Loire enterprise, has made a deal to supply high-technology material to the Soviet installation at Novolipetsk, south of Moscow. However, there will be no transfer of production skills and techniques, which the Soviets are also seeking. This is the second time that French industry has taken over an American contract for political reasons. Last year, CIT Honeywell Bull, the French computer firm, sold a computer to the Soviet news agency TASS. The original computer contract with Sperry Univac was called off by President Carter two years ago to protest the imprisonment of Soviet dissidents. The computer was needed by the news agency to provide coverage for the Moscow Olympics last summer. The French government is said to have had second thoughts about the steel equipment deal, but its final approval was believed to have been influenced by France's big Communist-led union group, the CGT.

Vatican City

Shared Opposition

Recent visits to the Vatican by King Hussein of Jordan and Vice President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt have underlined the shared opposition of the Papacy and the Arab world to the new status of the Holy City, which the Knesset declared last July to be Israel's "perpetual and indivisible" capital. The Vatican has long considered that an international status is the only proper guarantee of the safety of and access to the Holy Places along guidelines which have been observed, formally and informally, since the British mandate of 1922. In a memorandum to members of the United Nations dated last June—that is, before the Knesset's decision—the Holy See asserted that "it would be a grave matter if any unilateral step were taken tending to change the status of the Holy City," and that "the meaning and value of Jerusalem are such as to override the interest of one single state." The law passed by the Knesset does indeed guarantee protection of and access to the Holy Places of the respective religions involved, but the Israeli position is that the United Nations can have no jurisdiction or power over the status of Jerusalem. Informed opinion in Vatican circles says that while the Pope is not necessarily seeking "allies" among the Arab governments on this question, these visits to the Vatican on the part of Arab leaders highlight the fact that there is a vital Christian stake in Jerusalem, a point often forgotten in the diplomacy of the "Christian" West.

Rangoon

Awakening

Burma may be on the verge of awakening from almost two decades of isolation from the rest of the world and becoming, inevitably, a political force in eastern Asia. Ever since

1962, when he deposed U Nu, the grand old man of Burmese independence, and assumed total power, Chief of State U Ne Win has led his country along the "Burmese path to socialism," which meant shutting out all exterior influence, refusing foreign contacts, including both trade and aid, and keeping his country and its 33 million Buddhist inhabitants within the framework of an agricultural economy. Two Japanese ministers, including the foreign minister, have been recent visitors to Rangoon, and have now been followed by Britain's Princess Alexandra and her husband, Angus Ogilvy, an occasion considered a sounding by London of its former colonial territory. Ne Win has also recently allowed the aged U Nu to return home from exile, and has imported English experts to restore the teaching of the language, forgotten for a generation. Economic assistance will certainly be needed if Burma is to re-enter the stream of world intercourse. There are only 100,000 automobiles in the entire country, most of them twenty to forty years old. The public buildings and other infrastructure have badly deteriorated; the newspapers are strictly censored; no political opposition is allowed. At the same time, foreign observers in Rangoon point out that Ne Win has avoided being dragged into either the Soviet or the Chinese orbit of influence, and has managed to sidestep any connection with the warfare that has ravaged neighboring Indochina for the past 25 years.

Mueh Wenlock, Shropshire

Bull

The British government will introduce a bill at the next session of Parliament making it illegal for farmers to keep bulls in fields crossed by public footpaths. The Ramblers Association has reported a growing number of protests on this score in recent months. Heretofore the question has been determined by local by-laws, but the Department of the Environment believes it should now be regulated by statute, and therefore has included it in a forthcoming Wildlife and Countryside Bill. The new law will not apply to bulls which are not of a recognized breed or which are accompanied by cows or calves.



Utshak, Edmonton Journal

Rothe

"Pity—I just wanted to tell him he had a rebate coming."